

Opening Quote Background

Lincoln, His Life and Times, Henry J. Raymond. New York, 1864. Chapter title, “Anecdotes and Reminiscences of President Lincoln,” by Frank B. Carpenter, pp. 725–780.

In February 1864, Frank Carpenter went to Washington at the behest of the President. He was commissioned to produce a painting commemorating the first reading in cabinet council of the Emancipation Proclamation. He spent six months in Washington in close company with the President and his cabinet in order to produce this work.

At one point, Carpenter relates a conversation with the President, now two years after the release of the Proclamation. Carpenter himself described the Emancipation Proclamation as, “...the most sublime moral event in our history.” Lincoln replies, “Yes, as affairs have turned, it is the central act of my presidency, and the great event of the 19th century.”

Life of Abraham Lincoln, J.G. Holland. Gordon Bill, Springfield, MA, 1866.

The author notes that the Emancipation Proclamation was received with “profound interest” by the whole country.

Two days after the Emancipation Proclamation was released, a “large body of men” assembled at the White House and called for the president to appear. He addressed them and alluded the Emancipation Proclamation, “What I did, I did after a very full deliberation, and under a heavy and solemn sense of responsibility. I can only trust in God I have made no mistake.”

The author goes on to relate that two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was released, that Lincoln was enabled to say, “...As affairs have turned, it is the central act of my presidency, and the great event of the 19th century.”